

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

by Bruce Barrett

The Artist's Life

Kathy Ferrara dressed the part, she said, for her Sunday reception at the Helen Bumpus Gallery, Duxbury Free Library. Her watercolors (hung April 4th) caught my eye. Actually, they turned my head and pulled me right down the stairs. Precise execution, crisp yet natural colors, and straightforward selection of timeless subjects take a would-be artist like me to school — she covers well-known ground but always with a fresh eye, vitality, and confidence.

The bad news — I missed the reception. The good news — Kathy's paintings registered strongly enough for me to talk them over with her anyhow. Her selections for the show explore various techniques and subjects from the watercolor repertoire for good reason: Kathy is a student. After a career in commercial art, she has now branched into fine art. A graduate of Boston's Vesper George School of Art, she worked for years as a fashion illustrator, later adding "hard lines" (toasters, for example). But her work for the *Boston Globe*, flyers, and circulars dried up when the industry turned to photography. In the mid-1990's she gave up commercial art, and took up watercolor.

"I was awful," she says, but she handled herself like a student, and began to study with local artists. She has

taken private instruction from Andrew Kusmin, Michael Domina, and Marshall Joyce. Once she "got it," as she puts it, the results were good,



the encouragement from others gratifying. Her first solo show was in 1996 at the Yankee Book and Art Gallery in Plymouth, and she's won numerous local awards, including three successes at Duxbury Art Association Winter Juried Shows.

Wednesday, April 21, 2004

Kathy brought attention to detail to her new art, learned in commercial work. Her design and drawing skills were strong and seasoned, but watercolors demanded a frightening difference — they have an unforgiving mind of their own. Her new teachers encouraged her to get loose, to let her painting flow. You'll see the results at the library.

It's easy to think of art and artists as self-driven, boiling with talent and compulsion to create, but the word Kathy uses most is "encouragement." Her parents encouraged her first, when she started painting at six years old. They hung her finger-painted sailboat in their Hingham living room, not on the refrigerator. Later, there was Nelly Suzedell, her art teacher at Hingham High. Flamboyant, free-spirited — dressed all in black with flowing red hair — she taught art and something of the artist's life in an otherwise preppy town. Above all, she encouraged.

"She must be long gone by now," says Kathy, but she still has the note Nelly wrote in her Hingham High yearbook.

"Dear Kathy,

I am happy to have had you paint those green pots. Your interest in design and exotic renditions of the literary aspect of art has been such an inspiration to our dear art class. May you always approach life in such a charming manner.

N. Suzedell

So Kathy went straight to art school from high school, encouraged in her work, encouraged in her manner. Today, she's still encouraged. She dressed the part, she says, for the reception Sunday, and once again felt the lift — the guests, the notes in the guest book, and the sale of seven paintings. Twenty-five per cent of the proceeds will support the Helen Bumpus Gallery. Priced in the low hundreds, Kathy's works are a bargain. The show will hang until the end of May, with another planned for Marshfield's Ventress Library in November and December. Have a look. You'll be encouraged, too.

